



# Mowing and Vegetation Management Program

The Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) maintains the medians and roadsides along interstate highways, U.S. routes, and state roads in Indiana. INDOT maintains roadside grass and vegetation in an environmentally sensitive manner that is consistent with the conditions presented by local climate, topography, vegetation, and rural and urban development.

INDOT strives to balance safety, costs, environmental protection, and aesthetics when maintaining roadside vegetation. Our vegetation management program is focused on improving safety along our highways by maintaining vegetation at a safe height for driver visibility. Our practices also preserve natural wildlife habitat and plants, control or remove invasive and noxious plants, and strives to improve the overall appearance of roadside rights-of-way.

## Our Management Program Explained

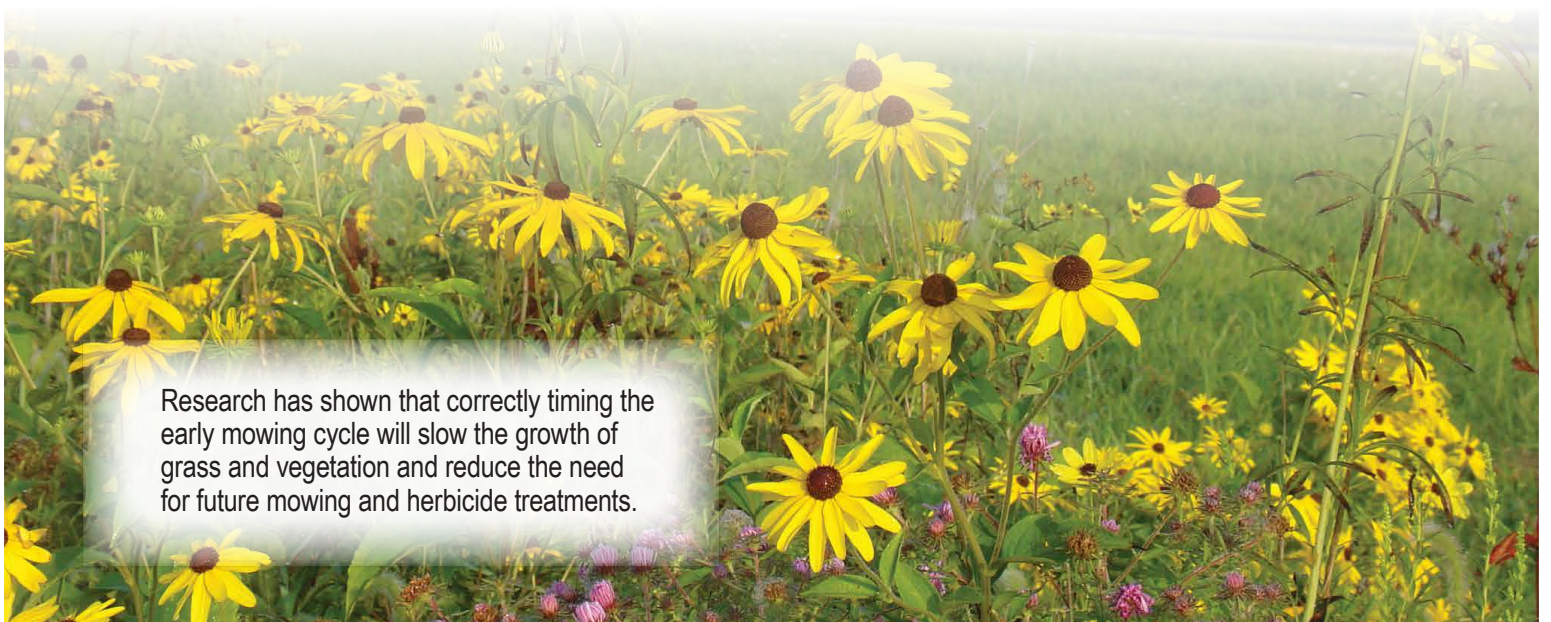
INDOT's mowing and vegetation management program includes herbicide treatments, mowing, woody vegetation management, and seeding with turf grass and native wildflowers and grasses.

It costs Indiana taxpayers approximately \$19 million each year to mow the more than 40,000 acres of INDOT-maintained right-of-way along interstates, U.S. routes, and state roads. Broadcast herbicide applications for invasive and noxious broadleaf plants costs approximately \$60 per treated acre.

Successful vegetation management minimizes the need for mowing and herbicide application on the more than 100,000 acres of INDOT-managed land adjacent to our roadways, which ultimately reduces impacts on the environment and saves money. Promoting and planting a diverse native plant community of grasses and wildflowers helps battle invasive and noxious plants.

## Vegetation Management Goals

- Enhance the safety of the traveling public
- Protect the environment and reduce costs
- Reduce erosion and provide storm drainage
- Promote and preserve native wildlife habitats and plants
- Improve roadside appearance



Research has shown that correctly timing the early mowing cycle will slow the growth of grass and vegetation and reduce the need for future mowing and herbicide treatments.

## INDOT Mowing



INDOT crews closely monitor the growth of grass and vegetation and they time INDOT's mowing cycles based on geographic location and weather.

Except in areas where we mow tall vegetation to improve driver visibility, our first mowing cycle takes place after rapid spring plant growth ends – which is approximately mid-May in the southern part of the state and early June in the north. Maintenance crews address sight-distance concerns between mowing cycles through selective mowing and herbicide application.

## INDOT Vegetation Management Zones

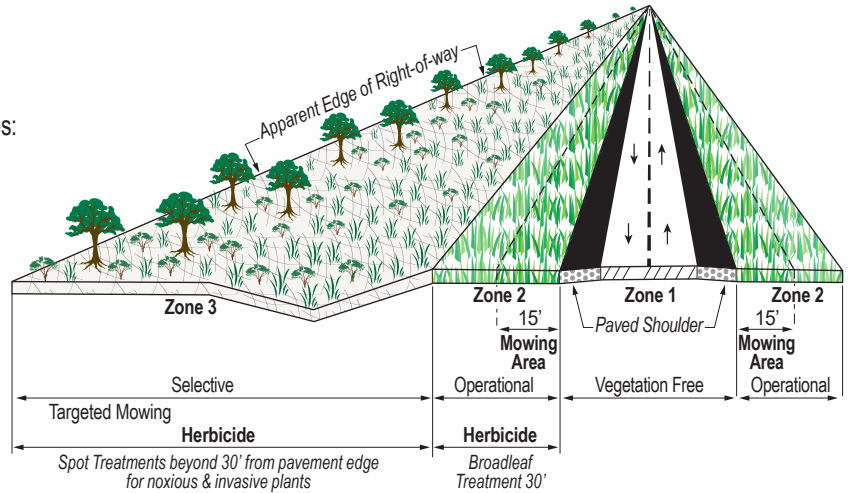
INDOT's mowing and vegetation management activities focus on three zones:

**Operational Zone:** This area includes highway medians and extends 30 feet out from the edge of the roadway shoulder pavement where right-of-way exists. The 15 feet closest to pavement is mown at least twice a year, while the entire 30-foot zone receives a biennial broadleaf selective herbicide treatment to target broadleaf invasive and noxious plants to keep them from spreading. Along high traffic volume roads and in urban areas, this zone may be mowed three to five times a year, depending on need. Medians less than 60 feet are mown full-width with each cycle. Additional mowing occurs at intersections to ensure sight distance as conditions require.

**Selective Zone:** In areas where right-of-way extends beyond the 30 foot Operational Zone and out to 80 feet from the edge of pavement, INDOT will allow native plants room to grow and create a natural appearance. In rural areas, INDOT will utilize spot mowing and selective herbicide applications to control invasive and noxious plants and slow the growth of woody vegetation to improve safety.

**Natural Zone:** Where right-of-way extends beyond 80 feet from the road edge, INDOT will allow native plants and woody vegetation to grow and serve as a defense against invasive species. This area shields the roadway from neighboring properties, promotes native plant diversity, and connects fragmented wildlife habitats. INDOT will carry out limited spot mowing and selective spot treatments of invasive and noxious plants in these areas as populations are identified. Other forms of land management, such as selective timber harvesting, may occur in this zone where and when appropriate under the guidance and direction of DNR foresters.

**Other Zones:** Areas adjacent to INDOT bridges and environmentally sensitive areas receive special treatment.



## SAFETY TIPS FOR MOTORISTS



INDOT mowing crews and equipment operate adjacent to Indiana's roadways. Motorists should be aware of mowing operations and give our workers the time and space they need to do their jobs safely:

- Obey all posted warning signs
- If possible, change lanes away from mowers and other roadside maintenance equipment and operations.
- Do not use cellphones while driving, especially in work zones

## Mowing and Herbicide Guidelines

- Mowers are adjusted to cut vegetation at a height of no less than six inches and are operated to prevent scalping, rutting, or other damage.
- Areas planted with wildflowers or areas that support unique wildlife are mowed only under specific guidelines.
- Areas planted with trees and steep slopes are not mowed.
- Herbicide is not applied under conditions that result in an impact to non-targeted vegetation or when property owners, including farmers, are maintaining adjacent property.



June 2023



**Indiana Department of Transportation**  
100 North Senate Avenue, Room N758  
Indianapolis, IN 46204  
[www.in.gov/indot](http://www.in.gov/indot)



**INDOT Customer Service:**  
855-463-6848  
[INDOT4U.com](http://INDOT4U.com)  
[INDOT@indot.in.gov](mailto:INDOT@indot.in.gov)

